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POPULAR TUMULTS

Religiously improv'd : 9

IN A ~~Range~~

SERMON

Occasioned by the

Late DISORDERS.

Preach'd in

GOODMANS-FIELDS,

August 1. 1736.

By SAMUEL WILSON.

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POPULAR TUMULTS
Religious

IN A

GENERAL

Commentary

THE BIBLE

Translation

GOODMAN



BY JAMES WILSON

LONDON

Printed by J. Wilson in Great Britain
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and A. Dorn in Philadelphia
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Amos iii. 6.

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?



N insurrection of the people is like the raging of the sea, sudden and impetuous ; and whatever may be its real or pretended foundation, it spreads an universal terror. Nor is fear, when duly regulated, on such an occasion irrational ; for who can be secure in his person, family, or property, when friend and foe lie undistinguished, and fall a common sacrifice to the caprice or violence of a lawless multitude ?

THE report of a tumult may be attended to without an extraordinary emotion of spirit, especially if at a considerable distance, and not likely to reach us; but when it is in our neighbourhood, brought to our very doors, and the confused noise continually rolling in our ears, the alarm must be very affecting to all, as it has sadly proved fatal to some *: so that the prophet might well ask, *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid.*

IN the beginning of the chapter, God lays a heavy charge against the children of Israel, the family which he brought out of Egypt; *You only have I known* (says he) *of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.* Special favours call for suitable returns. A professing people may depend upon smarting sooner or later for their transgressions. God will not always continue his abused goodness, or walk with them, if rebellious, in a way of providential kindness, any more than a man

* Mrs. SIBLEY, an honourable member of this church, thrown into convulsions, which ended in death, by excessive surprize at the late disorder in *Rosemary-lane.*

would

would chuse to walk or converse familiarly with his enemy ; which seems to be the meaning of the question, *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

AND lest they should flatter themselves from the delay of judgment, into an apprehension they might escape the threaten'd vengeance, its certainty is represented in the strongest terms: *Will a lion rore in the forest, when he hath no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? Shall one take a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?* As these are either highly improbable, or absolutely impossible, so the time was hastening on, when God would terribly visit the transgressions of this people upon them, according to the language of the holy prophets, who had denounced their destruction, in case of continued disobedience and impenitence. Upon this you have the words of the text; *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?* that is, shall notice be given of the approach of an enemy to besiege or storm the city, and its inhabitants remain careless and unmov'd?

will not the clattering of arms, the sound of trumpets, drums, and other warlike instruments, make them run together, and in wild confusion, trembling and afraid, will they not consult and provide for the common security? How criminal then is your stupidity (as if the prophet had said to *Israel*) who can hear without concern of the Lord of Hosts coming out against you, to avenge the quarrel of his covenant? Remember it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of a living and angry God. And lest in their calamities they should look no higher than to second causes, and forget the righteous hand of God stretched out against them for their sins, it is added, *Is there any evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?* Whoever may be the instrument of trouble, God sits at the helm, superintends and governs the whole as shall answer the purposes of his glory, whether in the correction of his people, or ruin of his enemies.

THE method I propose in the farther consideration of the words, is,

I. To

I. To give you some account of the passion of fear.

II. SHew you when it may be said to exceed, and becomes criminal.

III. THE influence it will have upon us when sanctified, and under the management of the Lord the Spirit.

IV. SETTLE the different senses of the term *evil*, and enquire how far God is, or is not, concern'd in it.

I. WE begin with giving you some account of the passion of fear. And we all know it stands oppos'd to hope; that its object is some evil, either real or imaginary: and, as one observes, it is an evil which is future, or in prospect; for what of that kind is past, is the occasion of joy, that we are deliver'd from it; and what is present, or the affliction we are immediately under, affects us with grief and sorrow: so that it is some apprehended difficulty, danger, loss or disgrace coming upon us, or something which will prove painful, injurious, or detrimental

tal to us, which is the occasion of fear ; and it rises and sinks according to the probability of the evil's overtaking us, and the degree of injury we shall receive from it. It greatly differs in different persons : in some it discovers itself in solicitude and anxiety, in others in despondency ; in some in despair, and in others in a mixture of them all : And, as the excellent Dr. WATTS observes *, when it settles into a habit, it maintains a most dreadful and insupportable tyranny over the mind, and makes life itself a burden. It is not easy to say what a disorder it throws the person into where it is violent. What a sickly languor spreads itself over the countenance, whilst the animal spirits are depress'd, and the man ready to sink and faint under his frightful and gloomy apprehensions. But as this, with all the other passions of the mind, such as love, hatred, joy and sorrow, are better known in experience than by description, I proceed to shew you,

II. WHEN it may be said to exceed, and becomes criminal.

* The Doctrine of the passions, p. 56.

AND to be sure this is the case when it is without foundation. Thus how many are frightened at the sight of creatures which are not only entirely harmless, but in particular cases exceedingly useful and beneficial? Others shall be thrown into an agony if left in the dark, or if oblig'd to go in the evening, and alone, near the sepulchres of the dead. These, and others of the like kind, may be called irrational as well as sinful fears, and yet how sadly are some persons harrafs'd with them?

AGAIN, fear is unwarrantable when it exceeds, and is superior to the danger or evil dreaded. And it is surprising how this passion magnifies and multiplies things: sometimes suggesting if this or the other affair miscarry, it will be our utter ruin; when if it should, and of that we are not certain, it is far enough from affecting our main interest, and we can perhaps very well spare what is thereby lost or taken from us.

IF there is a tumult in the suburbs, fear spreads the confusion all over the city, and if uncheck'd, will soon represent the whole
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constitution as in the utmost danger; hundreds become thousands, and every stranger is dreaded as an enemy, till we recollect our selves, and begin calmly to enquire into the truth of things, and what we have to fear or hope from the present situation of them. And how are they to be pitied, as well as blam'd, who in the midst of plenty are followed with carking uneasy fears of poverty, whereby they are at once tied up from their present duty, and render'd continually uncomfortable to themselves?

A DISTRUST of providence is usually the companion of immoderate fear. How often does it put us upon saying, as *Israel* formerly, *Can or will God provide a table in the wilderness**? And when we see the clouds look black, and the storm ready to break upon us, and no visible way of escape, how are we sometimes tempted, in the impatience of our spirits, to charge God foolishly, and entertain unworthy thoughts of his power, wisdom, grace, or faithfulness? There is indeed a dishonourable stupidity; and it is unworthy the reasonable creature, as well as a reproach to the christian, to be

* Psal. lxxviii. 19.

unaffected when God is coming out of his place in a way of judgment, when he ſpeaks in his threatenings, or in ſome dark and afflictive providences, we ought to *hear* and *fear*. But to ſay the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious, becauſe we ſee the rod in his hand; or that he cannot or will not deliver, becauſe the means are hid from us; what is this but to limit the Holy One of *Iſrael*, whoſe *arm is not ſhorten'd*, that it cannot ſave; nor his ear heavy, that he cannot hear*.

MOREOVER, our fears are ſinful when they put us upon uſing indirect or unwarrantable means for our eſcape or deliverance. Now theſe are either ſuch as God has expreſſly forbid, and which we cannot attend to without a breach of our allegiance to him; or which, though otherwiſe indifferent, may, according to the circumſtances of the caſe, prove inglorious to him, or hurtful to our fellow-creatures. Thus *Saul*, who had cut off many who had familiar ſpirits, and wizards, out of the land, and ſo could not be ignorant of God's will in that matter; in his diſtreſs, when *Samuel* was dead, and a large hoſt of the *Philiftines*

* *Iſaiah* lix. 1.

came up against him, applied to a witch at * *Endor* to know the issue of the battle which proved so fatal to him and his family ; here- in acting contrary to his duty, going out of God's way, and bringing fresh guilt and trouble on his conscience. God commands the prophet to denounce a *woe to the rebellious children, that take counsel, but not of the Lord ; that cover with a covering not of God's Spirit ; which is called, adding sin to sin* †. Their crime was, that, without asking counsel of God, yea contrary to his express will, they were for going down-into *Egypt*, to strengthen themselves in the strength of *Pharaoh* ; therefore God threatens *the strength of Pharaoh should be their shame, and their trust in the shadow of Egypt their confusion*. We are not to do evil that good may come of it, nor venture upon sin to deliver us out of the greatest danger. It was a noble reply which *Nehemiah* made to *Shemaiah*, when he would have tempted him to shut himself up in the temple ; *Should such a man as I flee ? And who is there that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life ? I will not go in*. Now it was far from being unlawful for him to have

* 1 Sam. xxvii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

† Isaiah xxx. 1, 2, 3.

gone into the temple, or at another time to have endeavoured to have preserved himself from danger, by flying to that or any other place for refuge; but the circumstances of the work they were engaged in, the character he bore, the place he filled, the advantage the enemy would take, and how much it would discourage the servants of the Lord, made that which otherwise might have been his duty and interest, appear to him to be sinful and unwarrantable: for thus he represents it, *Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so and sin. And that they might have matter of an evil report, that they might reproach me* *.

THUS fear, when groundless, immoderate, attended with unbelief, and putting us upon seeking deliverance by unlawful means, is at once our imperfection, crime, and punishment; for next to jealousy, the canker of the soul, there is not a more painful passion we carry about us. Which leads me,

III. To consider the influence it will have upon us when duly regulated, and under

* Nehem. vi. 11, 13.

the conduct and management of the Lord the Spirit. And,

1. It will engage the soul in close and serious reflection, according to the wise-man's advice; * *In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider.* And here the first and principal inquiry will be into our *state*, whether we have good reason to conclude we are the children of God, accepted in Christ, and interested in the divine love and favour; what evidence we have of the pardon of our sins, and that if the dreaded evil should overtake us, it will find us among the saints who are precious in the eyes of the Lord. A good man will be frequent, and according to his light, desires to be impartial, in the duty of self-examination: he is often calling himself to an account whether he is in the faith, and trembles at the thought of being deceived. And that he may perform this duty with greater advantage, he is sometimes providentially thrown into the prospect of approaching death and eternity; and then he is saying to himself, what if God should call me this day; if this sickness, or this calamity

* Eccles. vii. 14.

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should prove the means of my removal out of this world, shall I be found of God in peace; will the judge be my friend, and say to me, *Come, thou blessed?* Nor will any thing short of scriptural evidence give him satisfaction; and when the comforter is pleased to witness with his spirit, that he is an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ, he is sometimes, in the face of danger, enabled to join the church, in saying, * *God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not I fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.* Thus natural fear is owned to put him upon thinking; and whilst he is musing, his fear vanishes, and his evidence brightens for a glorious eternity.

AGAIN, if he is struck with the appearance of famine, pestilence, or war, or any other desolating judgment, ready to break forth among the people with whom he dwells; he will be ready to lay his hand upon his heart, and say, alas! Lord, what have I done? have I not contributed to the general guilt which cries so loud for

* Psal. xlvii. 1, 2.

vengeance? have I been as humble, serious, and circumspect as I ought to have been, and as might reasonably be expected from one entrusted with so many talents? have I mourned in secret for the abominations of the land? have I reproved them by my life, and suppressed them by my authority, as far as my influence extended? or rather, have I not given too much occasion to the sinner to encourage himself in his impiety, by my carelessness, coldness, and indifference? And whilst he is looking into his state, and reviewing his conduct, the prospect of approaching judgments will put him, when sanctified, upon enquiring into the frame of his spirit, whether he is ready to go forth and meet his Lord at the shortest warning; and, as having his loins girt, and lamp burning, can heartily eccho to the cry, *behold the bridegroom comes, Amen, even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly.* David was in a sweet frame when he said; * *One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.* And whilst his soul was thus

* Psalm, xxvii. 3, 1, 2, 4, 5.

panting after God, he could add, *The Lord is my light, and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even his enemies and foes, came upon him to take away his life, or eat up his flesh, he observes, they stumbled and fell; and concludes for the time to come, God would hide him in his pavilion, in the time of trouble, in the secret of his tabernacle would he hide him, and set his feet on a rock.*

2. NATURAL fear, when under the conduct of the Spirit of God, will lay us low in our own eyes, and prostrate us before the throne of grace, with humble acknowledgments of our guilt, vileness, and unworthiness: for as it is impossible to be faithful in the examination of our own hearts and ways, without observing we have sinned against heaven, and done much evil in the sight of the Lord; so the believer, when meditating on God's judgments, either threatened or appearing, will, as the prophet describes the man bearing *the yoke in his youth**, set alone and keep silence, putting his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be

* Lam. iii. 27, 28, 29.

hope. Thus the patriarch *Jacob*, when greatly distressed in soul, and afraid that his injured incensed brother, now marching against him with an armed multitude, would utterly destroy him and his family, and take his substance for a spoil, in his earnest application to God by prayer, makes this acknowledgment; * *I am not worthy of, or I am less than the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.* As if he had said, “ O God of my
 “ fathers *Abraham* and *Isaac*, who, notwithstanding the folly and ingratitude which
 “ have been found with me, hast been very
 “ gracious to thy servant, though for my
 “ unworthiness thou mightest justly give me
 “ up to the cruel resentment of my enraged
 “ brother, as I have utterly forfeited thy
 “ favour by my transgressions; yet for thy
 “ mercy sake, and according to that un-
 “ merited goodness which has followed me
 “ all my days, preserve and deliver me.”

THERE is a sort of humility which may be found with the ungodly in a time of emi-

nent danger. Thus when the prophet *Elijah* tells * *Ahab*, who sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, that he would bring evil upon him, and take away his posterity, and make his house like that of *Jeroboam*: that he who died of *Ahab* in the city, the dogs should eat; and he who died in the fields, the fowls of the air should eat; we are told, that when this most wicked prince heard these words, they affected him so far, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly; and that the Lord had such regard to it, that he says to the prophet, Seest thou how *Ahab* humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house. It appears to have been a fear of vengeance overtaking him and his offspring, a dread of punishment, not an hatred of sin, which brought him into the dust before God; whereas a saint, when under the rod, or in the expectation of it, will, like *Ephraim*, be brought to † bemoan himself, and, as turned and instructed, he will be ready to smite on his thigh, and be

* Kings xxi. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.

† Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

ashamed, yea even confounded, as bearing the reproach of his youth.

WHEN the prophet *Jonah* delivered his awful message to the inhabitants of *Nineveh*, that within forty days, if they repented not, their city should be destroyed; we are told, they believed God, and proclaimed a fast; and, as an evidence of their deep humiliation, put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them: for their prince himself arose from his throne, and laid his royal robe aside, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes; and by an edict forbid food or drink to man or beast, and ordered both to be covered with sackcloth, as expressive of their desert of punishment should God enter into judgment with them.

THUS as we are apt to forget ourselves, and give a loose to pride and vanity, when at peace, and attended with great prosperity, God sometimes very wisely and graciously changes the scene, and trouble, disappointment, and rebuke appear on every hand; our fears rise high, and at length we are brought to ourselves, and, with
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the returning prodigal, with the utmost abasement we acknowledge, *Father, we have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.*

3. FEAR, when under the conduct of the Holy Spirit, where the case may have the most formidable aspect, will put us upon looking round to see if there is not some help, or foundation for hope, or whether it is absolutely desperate, and will admit of no relief; and tho' there appear but little encouragement, and we know not what may be the issue, it will engage us to make the venture, and put it to a trial, throwing ourselves on the compassion of a gracious God, with whom judgment is a strange work, and mercy his delight.

DAVID, when in a very uncomfortable and desponding frame, addresses himself in this instructive language, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God**: As if he had said, what though thou art forsaken of friends, persecuted by enemies, and danger and death meet thee wherever thou turnest, art thou utterly to cast away

* Psal. xlii. 11.

thy confidence? is there no room for hope, not for hope in God? cannot he uphold, maintain, and secure thee? *hope thou in God.* And when the thought of God's purity and our pollution, his kindness and our ingratitude, seem to forbid our approach, and cut the sinews of our expectation, and we are afraid of being rejected or cut off, like *Benhadad* and his servants, having heard the God of *Israel* is a merciful God, we are brought, when our fears work kindly, to an humble determination to go out to him, hoping that he will save us alive; however with *Job* we resolve, though he should slay, to put our trust in him.

4. OUR fears are visibly under a divine conduct, when they send us to the mercy-seat with those pleas which God hath dictated in his word, and which other saints have made use of with success. We are not on the one hand to imagine that God will alter his mind; or break in upon his purposes and decrees, by our importunity; or, that when we fill our mouths with arguments, and open our cause before him with the greatest liberty, and in language the most becoming, he is subject to change; for
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he remains the same. He is of one mind, and whatever he has determined, comes to pass, in nature, providence, grace, and glory. We are equally to guard, on the other hand, against an apprehension of prayer as a matter of indifference, since it is every where commanded and encouraged by many exceeding great and precious promises; and as we are to be *instant in prayer*, and to *pray without ceasing*, so we are more particularly directed to call upon the Lord in the day of trouble, who hath undertaken for the deliverance of his people, and that they shall glorify him. Now as fear usually drives us to prayer, so, when it is under a spiritual direction, we shall be asking wherewithal shall we come before the Lord, or how shall we bow ourselves in his presence? To go in our own polluted worthless name, would increase our guilt, by a most provoking presumption; to mention our own righteousness, would betray our pride and ignorance, and affront rather than please: for as *Joseph* said to his brethren, *Except you bring your brother Benjamin, ye shall see my face no more**: so there is no approach to God for rebellious sinners, but in the Lord Jesus

* Gen. xliii. 5.

Christ, the great mediator, in whom, and in whom only, we have access unto the Father by one Spirit; the leading and principal plea therefore, is the merit of the obedience and sufferings of the eternal Son of God; or, that for the sake of our great advocate, God would bestow this blessing, or avert the other impending judgment. On this basis the apostle founds his advice, *Seeing we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, as he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin; let us come boldly to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need**: That is, whatever the case may be, whether we are oppressed with guilty fears, and under melancholly apprehensions as to the fiery indignation of an offended God, or want help against a temptation or corruption, or for our present support, or future assistance, all is to be sought of God, as the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him the God of all grace and consolation.

* Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

MOREOVER, besides the blood and righteousness of Christ, we are permitted to plead with God the fatherly pity there is in his heart, the tender bowels of compassion which are found with him, and the multitude of his tender mercies. Thus when *David* had fallen, to the breaking of his bones, and his sin was set home upon his conscience, he does not only say, *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean**; in which he is supposed to have respect to the blood of Christ, the substance of that type; but adds, *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.* Here we are to remember, that grace and mercy only reign thro' righteousness; and that we who live under the sound of the gospel, have no warrant to look for any blessing or salvation, but from the mercy of God in Christ.

AGAIN, sometimes the extremity of the case, and impossibility of relief from any other hand, as well as the concern which God's name and glory have in the deliver-

* Psal. li. 7, and i.

ance, with the reproach which would attend the triumph of the enemy if it should be delay'd or deny'd, have been produced by saints as very powerful arguments; when standing in the gap, and wrestling hard for themselves and a professing people. Thus *Moses* first takes notice of the goodness and power of God in bringing the people out of *Egypt*, and then humbly suggests what interpretation the *Egyptians* would be ready to make if God should now consume them, viz. that *for mischief he had brought them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth* *. And thus *Daniel*, the prophet greatly beloved, when in the most pathetic terms he was making his confession, and presenting his supplications, he prays that God would cause his face to shine on his sanctuary, not for his righteousness, or that of the people, but for his own sake; and repeats it again, O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name †. And as God has sometimes spared a city or nation for the sake of a few saints, so it is a very proper way

* Exod. xxxii. 12.

† Dan. ix. 19.

of reasoning with him when we are afraid of his judgments, that he would stay his hand, and not proceed to deserved severity, for the sake of those whom he has reserved to himself, and not suffered to bow the knee to *Baal*; those few precious ones, who are sighing and mourning for the abominations which are found in the land. If the Messiah had not been declared to be the seed of *Abraham*, and of the *Jewish* fathers according to the flesh, and if in the most degenerate situation of that church, there had not been a few who were faithful to the God of *Israel*; it is not easy to account for it, that God should not make an utter end of them, such was their idolatry and impiety. And though there are few if any of that scattered people, who are converted in our day; yet are they preserved for the sake of some who shall spring from them, who will one day be brought to look on him whom their forefathers pierced, and mourn. So that if fears arise, lest God should take the candlestick from among us, or root us up as a nation, by civil war, domestic dissensions, foreign invasions, or other judgments; we have yet, blessed be his name, to plead he has a few names, yea I trust

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some thousands in each of the three kingdoms, who are engraven on the breast-plate of our great high priest : and from the success which the gospel has, inconsiderable as it is in comparison of former ages, in being made the power of God now and then to the salvation of a poor sinner, there is encouragement to hope there are yet remaining some of the elect to be gathered in, and that for their sakes he will not utterly destroy us.

LASTLY, our fears are under a gracious direction, when we are brought in the strength of the Lord humbly to determine, that let the storm break how it will, or whatever part of it may light on us, we will not forsake our duty, or make shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience, by sinful compliances.

THIS indeed supposes that we are acquainted with our principles, and have something more to plead for them, than merely receiving them from our ancestors ; that we have set down and seriously counted the cost, and upon judgment and experience, after proper deliberation, have seen the balance

lance to be on God's side, and that peace of conscience is to be valued above life with all its enjoyments. We are not to imagine the three worthies, or *Daniel* who gives us the account of them, had arrived to such a pitch of stoicism, as to be unmoved at the sight of a burning furnace, or a lion's den: no doubt they were men of like passions with us; but when they consider'd the command of their prince could not be complied with, without sinning against the king of kings, their answer is, *Our God is able to deliver*, and we trust he will: but if not, we know the worst; the soul, the immortal part, is secure from any hurt by fire, 'tis the body only it can reach, so that let thy resentment be what it will, *Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up* *. And long before this, we are told that *Moses* the servant of God was proof against the flattering ensnaring honours and pleasures of a court, as well as the dangerous frowns of an angry and potent monarch.

WE are not rashly to run into danger, and if deliverance is offered, whether more

* Dan. iii. 18.

immediately by providence, as in the case of *Peter* by the ministry of an angel, or by the instrumentality either of friends or foes, we are by no means to refuse it, if it is to be had upon honourable terms; but if we must either sin or suffer, the saint desires to sanctify the Lord of hosts in his heart, and to make him his fear and his dread, and give the apostle's answer to every one who would fright him from his duty, *He ought to obey God rather than man* *. And from this reverential regard to the Most High, he will be jealous, lest by impatience and precipitance he should rush into any methods for deliverance, but what are justifiable and commendable. Thus when our fears put us upon self-examination, the result of which is deep humiliation, attended with an ingenuous confession of our sins, and an enquiry after help, which we seek from God, following him with pleas of his own providing; and though he should see fit to defer, or with-hold it, with *Joshua* are saying, as for us and ours, we will serve the Lord; or with *David* (when the people were talking of stoning him) encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. When these are the

* Acts v. 29.

fruits, whatever may be the occasion of fear, we have reason to bless God, as causing it so eminently to work for our good, and for consecrating that to his own service, which otherwise would be as dishonourable to him as painful to us. We now proceed,

Lastly, To state the different senses of the term *evil*, and consider how far God is concern'd in it, in answer to the question in the text, *Is there any evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?*

ALL evil is either moral, natural, or penal.

I. THERE is moral evil, or the evil of sin. Thus every thing which is base, unjust, and wicked, contrary to the law of God, the light of nature, the dictates of conscience, and the being or well being of society, is morally, or in its own nature, evil. So to deceive or over-reach by superior cunning, to spoil by the rude hand of violence, to persuade to intemperance, to tempt the chastity of a fellow-creature, to be ungrateful to parents, or disobedient to lawful masters or magistrates, are moral evils, as well as withholding love and obedience from God, the most amiable object and righteous sovereign.

sovereign. That there is a great deal of sin in our world, is to be lamented rather than disputed ; but *God is of purer eyes than to behold*, much less can he commit sin : it is the *abominable thing which his soul hates*. What is said of lying, may be affirm'd of every other immorality, with God it is *impossible* ; as the *Psalmist* observes *, *He is not a God who hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him. The foolish shall not stand in his sight, and he hates all the workers of iniquity*. And as *Jehosophat* observ'd to his judges †, *There is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts*.

“ G O D cannot do evil, as a judicious divine ‡ observes, through ignorance, because of his infinite knowledge ; nor through weakness, because of his infinite power ; nor through malice, because of his infinite rectitude : ” nor is this any imperfection, but his highest glory. And as it is impossible he should do iniquity himself, so he is in no degree the author or approver of it in us. If we think of the first

* Psal. v. 4, 5.

† 2 Chron. xix. 7.

‡ See Mr. HOWE on the holiness of God, pag. 506.

sin; and its entrance into our world, its certain God made man upright, and furnish'd him with knowledge and strength sufficient for the performance of every duty, and the resisting of every temptation: " and when " he fell, as the same author observes, there " was neither precept, nor outward force, " nor inward impulsions; " but the creator having prepared the creature as far as could in reason be desired for the combat, stood by as a spectator. So that God is concern'd with moral evil no farther than to permit it, and to check and restrain it from breaking forth, as it otherwise would, to the rendering our world an *Aceldema*, or a cage of unclean birds. Where he pardons it, he glorifies his holiness and mercy in receiving satisfaction from the surety, and discharging the creditor; and where he punishes it, justice triumphs, nor has mercy any thing to object.

2. THERE is natural or afflictive evil, called so not as if there would have been any affliction had there been no sin, but as it is common to all the sons and daughters of *Adam*; for *man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward*: and some of the best saints have had a very large share of it; not
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so much as a punishment for, but as a means of the cure of sin, and for the improvement of their graces. Now none of these arise out of the dust, but come from God either immediately or by permission; particularly he orders the time when, the instrument by which, the period how long, and the degree in which they shall affect us, and the fruits and effects they are to produce; all these are under his controul, direction and management. God tells *Abraham*, * *His seed should be a stranger in a land that was not theirs, and be afflicted four hundred years*: and when these were accomplished, according to the divine prediction, we read, *The self-same day all the host of the Lord went out of the land of Egypt*. And when seventy years were expired, according to promise, God delivered his people from the *Babylonish* captivity. And as to the afflictions of a believer, the prophet asks †, *Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind*. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the

* Gen. xv. 13, 14.

† Isaiah xxvii. 7, 8, 9.

fruit to take away his sin. He who doth not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men, will approve himself * faithful, in not suffering his people to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it. And tho' † no chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, to a child of God, it shall yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness: for his light afflictions, which are but for a moment, not only work together for good, but work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Satan must wait God's leave before he can meddle with his servant Job; and when he had stript him of his substance, and bereft him of his children, he can't affect the peace of his mind, or the health of his body, but by a divine permission. And when God had shew'd the proud enemy how far he could uphold grace in a saint tried in the fire, what a flood-tide of prosperity roll'd in upon his servant, which the malicious adversary could in no degree prevent or interrupt. It is the mercy of Zion, that God holds the rod, as well as the sceptre, always

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

† Heb. xii. 11.

in his own hand; and as a *father pities his children, so the Lord pities them who fear him.*

3. THERE is what divines call penal evil, or the punishment of moral evil, inflicted on sinners in time or in eternity. Thus the destruction of the old world by a deluge, the overthrow of the cities of the plain by fire and brimstone, with all the other national or personal judgments which we read of in the Old or New Testament, may be consider'd as the vindictive hand of God against his enemies for their impiety. Sin is the breach of his righteous law, which denounces a curse against the violater of it; which curse, in all the dreadful import of it, takes place on every sinner not found in Christ. It is upon him in the city, follows him into the field; it enters into his basket and store; it reaches the fruit of his body, and the fruit of his land: and though men may call him blessed, as possessing sometimes a large portion of this world, God declares he is condemn'd already, and his wrath abides upon him. Sometimes the sinner is thrown into black despair, and the poison of God's wrath is ready to drink up his spirit. As he

he has formerly despised instruction, and harden'd his heart against God, mocking at his reproof, and contemning his counsel; so he has now the sentence of eternal death within him, and from the horror of a guilty and accusing conscience, is miserable in himself, and a terror to all about him. Nor is blindness of eyes, and searedness of conscience, to which God sometimes judicially gives men up, an inconsiderable part of the punishment of sin. This is threaten'd the followers of Antichrist, that because they ** receiv'd not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, but had pleasure in unrighteousness; therefore God would send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damn'd that believ'd not the truth.* O! it is a dreadful thing, but sometimes God in anger says concerning sinners, *They are joined to their idols, let them alone; whoever is filthy, let him be filthy still.* And how far soever Satan and infernal spirits, who tempt to sin now, may torment for it hereafter; and conscience, which the sinner at present takes a great deal of pains to lull asleep, then prove a worm which will never die, continually

* 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

gnawing and accusing him ; yet whoever are the executioners of divine wrath, and whatever the means of punishing, God is still the judge, who abhorring the crime, will pronounce sentence, and sheath the sword of his vengeance in the hearts of his enemies.

THUS what there is of sin or moral evil in the city, is contrary to God's nature, opposite to his will, and dishonourable to his name ; what of natural or afflictive evil, is under the regulation of his providence, and subservient to his glory, and the good of his people ; what is penal, is from his hand as a jealous God, who will by no means clear the guilty : In the whole, he is the judge of the universe, who can do nothing but what is right.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

I. WHAT reason have we to bless God for his great mercy to the nation in general, and this city in particular. We have been a people often saved of the Lord, our provocations run high ; the nature, number,
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and aggravations of our sins call aloud for vengeance. We have heard of pestilence, war, and famine at a distance; but they have not reached our borders. The late alarm may teach us what God can do, may it have its proper influence. May we think of our ways, and turn to him: surely his goodness should lead us to repentance. Is there a people round about us more happy? have we not the liberty of God's house? has he not crowned the year with his goodness? do we not sit under our vines and fig-trees, none making us afraid? what is wanting but a grateful heart, and an holy life? Should we go on to awaken his resentment, by our discontent, profaneness, and ingratitude, what have we to expect, but that in judgment he will let us feelingly know the worth of our mercies in the want of them? Strange delusion! to be ever murmuring when we have nothing to complain of so much as ourselves, and our disloyalty to the God and giver of all our enjoyments!

2. LET not the persecutor, oppressor, or injurious, promise himself indemnity from the permissive sufferance of providence, or think to shroud himself under the vain apprehension

prehension of being guiltless, because he is used as an instrument to punish an ungodly people. The * *Assyrian was the rod of God's anger*, and it is said he *sent him against an hypocritical nation, against the people of his wrath, and gave him a charge to take the spoil, and the prey, to tread them down like the mire in the street.* Notwithstanding which, as this was very far from being in the thoughts of that enemy, God declares, when he had performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, he would punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. And thus the apostle Peter charges wickedness and murder on the Jews, for crucifying the prince of life; at the same time declaring they could have had no power against him, but as he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God †. Though all things shall work together for good, to them who love God; and offences and injuries will come; yet woe to the man by whom they come: it were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. God is far from command-

* Isaiah x. 5, 6, 12, 13.

† Acts ii. 23.

ing or countenancing rebellion, riots and disorders, yea he will severely punish the authors of them, though he make them serve the purposes of his glory.

3. How should we pity and pray for stupid incorrigible sinners, who are deaf to the language of mercy, and the voice of judgment! God *speaks once, yea twice, and they hear him not.* He is long suffering, and does not speedily strike, therefore their *hearts are fully set in them to do wickedly.* What shall I say to you, will nothing awaken you but the flames of hell? must you feel the vengeance of God before you fear it; O the hardening nature of sin! Poor mistaken creatures, you will one day hear the trump of God calling you to his tribunal, *when the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat.* How will you bear the opening of the books, when the whole of your secret wickedness will be laid open before angels and men, and conscience attest every charge; when the frowning judge will seal your doom with *a depart from me, ye cursed?* how will your faces gather blackness, and with what earnestness will you cry, though in vain, *to the rocks and*

and mountains to cover you? Be persuaded then to beg grace to flee from the wrath to come; Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are all they who put their trust in him.*

4. WHAT encouragement is here for the weak and fearful in Zion. Remember not a *sparrow falls to the ground without your heavenly father*; he has all hearts and all hands under his management; he says to the rage of your enemies, as to the *proud waves of the sea, hitherto shall ye go, and no farther*. Can you commit your souls, and their important concerns, into his hands, and not trust him with your substance, and natural lives? be not faithless, but believe. Remember he that has delivered, is yet able to deliver; go then to your father, call upon him in the day of trouble, and you need not be afraid of evil tidings, while your hearts are fix'd, trusting in the Lord.

· LASTLY, Let us eye the leadings of providence, and take special notice of the ap-

* Psal. ii. 13.

pearances of God for us ; and from what we see of his distinguishing goodness, learn to love him more, and serve him better, honouring him by a steady trust and dependance, and calling upon *our souls, and all that is within us, to bless his holy name*. Some of you I know, and with good reason, have been greatly affected with the late tumult, and the kind hand of your God upon you, in preserving your persons and dwellings : Beg of him to keep it upon the thoughts of your heart, and inspire you with new vigour in his service ; let him have the affection of your souls, the praise of your lips, and the obedience of your lives. Thus will you be prepared for every change, and may comfortably leave future events with him, who is the great governour of the world, your *father*, and your *friend*.

I HAVE only to add : May the God of peace be the glory of our nation, and on that glory constantly spread a defence ; that whilst nature, well-concerted alliances, and *British* courage, conspire to render foreign invasions unsuccessful, we may not destroy ourselves, or fall an easy prey to the ene-

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42 POPULAR TUMULTS, &c.

my, by civil jars and popular dissentions. May we be duly sensible of the mercy of a protestant government; and whilst our civil and religious liberties are secured inviolable, let us in our several stations endeavour to fear God, and keep his commandments; honour the king, and meddle not with them who are given to change.

F I N I S.



